O God our Father: thou who art the Lord of history, the creator of the universe: the sustainer + giver of all life: - humbly we come before thee. We are grateful O God that we can know thee - we give thanks that thou hast revealed thyself to us. We are joyful that thou hast called us forth to be thy people - doing thy will in the world. We rejoice that thou hast established the Church on thy Son Jesus Christ - and allowed us to take his name upon ourselves

We are thankful O Lord, for the many gifts thou hast so graciously bestowed upon us. We thank thee for the gift of life itself - for the opportunity of living in the world thou hast created We thank thee for our nation: For the opportunity of living in the tradition of Democracy and Freedom. We thank thee our Father for those upon whom we are dependent: For doctors + nurses For teachers + professors: For social + political leaders: we thank thee for those whose labor makes possible our common life - - we thank thee for each other.

And yet O Lord, even as we voice our gratitude we are reminded that we have misused the gifts thou hast given us. Thou hast given us life - and we have been disrespectful of the lives of others: thou hast given us freedom - and we have denied it to others: thou hast loved us fully - and we have loved only ourselves. Forgive us O Lord - For all wherein we have displeased thee: grant us thy grace that we may be - only as thou wouldst have us be.

Pray for nation - congress + pres: For the U.N. -

O God of mercy we pray for those less fortunate than we: - For the sick the down trodden For those who suffer hunger. We pray for those of our own number who are ill or in any way distressed.

Finally O Lord, grant to us all that peace that issues from true Faith. For we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - for his sake.

Amen.

# UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE U.S.A.
Office of
SYNOD OF INDIANA

JOHN N. FOX, D.D.
SYNOD EXECUTIVE

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September 19, 1963

URGENT

Dear Pastor:

The National Council of Churches has urged its member denominations to encourage each of its congregations to engage in a period of silent prayer on Sunday morning, September 22, in order to intercede for the families suffering the loss of children in last Sunday's Birmingham bombing, and for all involved in the struggle for racial justice.

You are urged to consider offering this opportunity to the congregation you serve, and after the period of prayer, to ask them to indicate, by card provided, that they will write or call Senators and Congressmen encouraging support of strong Civil Rights legislation.

Sincerely,

John N. Fox, D.D.

John N. Fox

JNF:mt

On Race Relations September 22, 1963

This week six children were buried in Birminghan Alabama. The place doesn't matter - they were buried somewhere in the United States. Four young girls were killed when a bomb exploded in the church where they were attending Sunday School. A boy was shot down by officers of the law as he ran away from an episode of rock throwing. Another young lad was shot through the head as he rode down the street on the handlebars of his brother's bicycle. I wonder what this lad was thinking about as the bulet ripped through his skull? ? what's for supper? - the arithmetic lesson? Let's not be too sentimental, however. These children got what was coming to them. They were guilty: guilty of a grievious offense - they were black. But more than that, they had directly prompted the violence they so richly deserved because their race wants to be treated as every other human being is treated in this great land of freedom, justice and equality. Guilty? They certainly were. These niggers, as I hear them affectionately called, had the arrogance to not only ask for, but demand their same rights as you and I had bestowed on us simply because we happened to be born into the Caucasion race. They were guilty all right : guilty of wanting to be Americans: guilty of wanting to see and feel and experience the freedom guaranteed them in the Constitution: guilty of wanting the equality that has been promised them by every politician from Thomas Jefferson on down who needed their vote.

These are serious offenses. After all their skin is dark. It's bad enought that they are colored differently: but that they'd have the absurd audacity to think America is honest in these guarantees of freedom and justice: this is a crime punishable by death: death by bomb and shot gun blast.

A few congressmen, led by Senator Hubert Humphery, have asked that this day be a day of national mourning for those victims of Birmingham justice. The Natinal Council of Churches: The lake County Council of Churches, the United Presbyterian Synod of Indiana and the Presbyteery of Logansport have asked that a period of silent prayer be devoted to the events of last week.

I've grieved all week: in fact I wept last week: my sorrow is for those children - for their parents - for the whole American Negroe Race - for men so consumed by their own hateed and madness that they've stopped being men in any sense of the word.

But my grief goes even deeper. I grieve today, because the same undercurrent of racial hatred; the same basic motives, that when fanned by passion ignited a fuse in a church, boil beneath the surface here in Dyer: in my town: in my church. The same detached and distant attituude; ("I don't think it's right to kill em: but they are niggers and they did ask for it: and besides what can I do") that today is in the minds of the white community of Birmingham; is present in the minds of my congregation:-people whom I have promised to try to lead and guide spiritually.

I grieve because I know and you know that the town of Dyer has every ingredient to become another scene of overt hateed. I grieve that we are capable of such hatred.

Therefore,
I must, in order to call myself a minister of the church of Jesus Christ, speak my mind to you, my congregation: and I speak to you as fellow Christians by way of a three fold appeal.

Firstly I appeal to you as Americans: as citizens of the United States. In the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are guarantees that every citizen of this nation shall enjoy a certain number of freedoms. Indeed the whole democratic ideal is based on the freedom and equality of every citizen. You've heard this before: the point I want to make is that when freedom is denied: we all lose a little bit. When justice is overlooked - just once- the democratic hope and ideal suffers a staggering blow.

Sometime in the 1930's the first Jew was killed in Germany. Sometime, someone went out and shot down a Jew - and the crowd cheered and spat out hatred: there were eulogies, no doubt, and expressions of official regret - but nothing was done: public morality was not arroused. After all it was just some smart Jew - and justice

was overlooked. At that time in Germany, no one, not even Eichman or Goebells or Hitler himself would have believed that in 1945 there would be 6,000,000 corpses and a tale of slaughtert that still can't be fully comprehended. Justice was overlooked just once: freedom was denied just once - at one time: but a trend was started that eventually erased the words freedom, justice and equality from the German mind. When a Negroe is denied the opportunity to be free: to ride on the bus with me: to eat beside me: to go to school with me: to live in my neighborhood- the great overall concept of American freed is shaken. Who'se to say then that some day Presbyterians won't be the hated minority: ? What is there to guarantee that my grandchildren won't be denied their freedom and dignoty because they're Christians, or white or something elde? Democrats,

The legal battle against segregation rages and will continue to rage for some time. And it is said by people on all sides that you can't legislate morality. Up until now we have shaken our heads and agreed; ("Yes, that's right: you can't force a man to love his neighbor.") But today I say non sense: I say that this is just a convenient way of avoiding being called a "nigger lover".

What is the source of morality? If there is such a thing as public morality: where does it come from? Who says it's bot right to take narcotics? Who says I can have only one wife if I'd loke to have two? Who says I can't kill my neighbor because I hate him? The law says. The law creates a morality that tells us what is right and what is wrong. If the law of the land says everyman shall be treated equally - and I defie anyone to find it differently: then the law should be obeyed: and when it is disobeyed it must be enforced. The law can't enforde love: but it can establish a standard of morality that eventually will bring about personal morality. The law can't force you to love a negroe: but then he doesn't especially want you'r love: ~~mmm~~ All he asks it that you respect the laws, ~~and~~ the nation and democratic ideals created by you and your forefathers. And so my first appeal is to fellow Americans: Americans who have had their freedom threatened because it has been denied to our fellow citizens.

of Dyer - whose responsibilty it is to maintain the integrity and decency and dignity of their town.

My third appeal is to you as members of the First United Presbyterian Church: a congregation of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA; part of the universal Church of Jesus Christ; a church that dares to call itself Holy and Univeral - the Body of Christ on earth. We know each other well in this church: I'm very much aware that a number of you, perhaps even a majority, don't agree with what I've said: I know there are some who are disagreeing as vehemently as they can right now. I've been informed in very unsubtle ways, that if negroes came to this church I'd lose a lot of members: a lot of important members it is diplomatically added. But it is to you that I still must appeal.

We have set about here to be the church of Jesus Christ - first and foremost. We hope and have faith that our number will grow: that soon we will be able to build a new ediface and become an ever more effective servant of our Lord. But let me say that, if to do this job, if in order to build a succesful church, we have to compromise and avoid touchy subjects - I want no part of it. If in order to expand and build we have to stop being a true church, I don't think you want any part of it. If what is required of me to be a successful pastor is a prostitution of everything I believe I will gladly preach in empty church: and know at least that I have been faithful to my Lord: whose church I have promised to serve.

Over the years the church has stopped being the church and become a comfortable ~~social institution~~ institution or club when it has backed away from the deep, unpopular and explosive social issues of the day. The church in Germany is histories best example. Rather than stand against the evils of Naziism it chose to remain silent: and it silenced itself right out of existence. The church of Jesus Christ today is called by God - to be in the world - doing his work - reconciling men to men - healing the wounds of hatred that separate men. Christ did this: and this kind of work was no more popular in his day than it is in ours. In fact socities answer to his efforts of reconciliation was a cross and death.

My second appeal is to you as citizens of Dyer: a community in the state of Indiana. You and I know that the time when a negroe family moves to Dyer is a lot closer today than it was five years ago. It may not happen this year, or in five or ten or twenty years: but it will happen: and perhaps those of us here today will be among those who will have to deal with the situation. You and I know that some time ago a negoe was prevented from moving to Dyer: we know that should the situation arise today a strong combine of economic forces would do all in its power to prevent such a move: we all know that should a negroe force his way in throught the courts, or sneak in by accident - there could and in all probability would be a veriatble explosion of hatred and resent. My appeal then is to be prepared: to think about in now before it happens: so that when it does we will act sensibly, responsibly, legally: I appeal to you to think about it know: so that when it happens we can prevent an episode that will make us eternally sorry.

The first fear of every community is economic: ("if one moves in my property value will fall down: if one moves in my neighborhood it will become a filthy slum overnight".) Let me say that where this has happened it has been the fault of the resident white community and not the incoming negroe. Time and time again it has been proven that these fears, in situations such as ours, are absolutley unfounded. Proerty values decrease when a neightborhood panics: when house after house is sold in desparartion, naturally the value of those houses will decrease and continue to decrease as long as panic reigns. When a neighborhood sits tight, however, when it refuses to panic and sell in desparation, property values do not fall. As far as a negroe family dirtying up a neighborhood, this too is a figmant of our fears, or perhaps a result of a trip through the slums. But the facts are that a lower income negroe, like a lower income white, has no desire to own and live in a home in a suburban neighborhood; neither do they have the resources to do so. The family that moves in is one of stature and commensurate education: a family very much like the other families that are able to live in the neighborhood. My appeal, however, is not to sociological data : but to residents

His church can be and do no other than this today. If it means public scorn, the church, like its Lord must accept that scorn: if it means suffering, the church must, like its lord, willingly suffer: if it means the death of a church then this too we must pay : for Jesus Christ did not stop short of death.

Christian responsibilty in this matter goes further than the responsibility of citizenship or residence in Dyer. It goes straight to the heart of the matter: to our faith in Jesus Christ and in his church: to our responsibilty as Christians to do what we know he would have us do.

Jesus Christ died that men might know God's love: and further - that they might show God's love by loving each other. This is a simple maxim: I know no other way to say it: and with it I appeal to you.

Youngsters have died: but their death needn't be in vain: if it has jolted us out of our detached apathy: if it has forced us to rethink our position and our responsibility.

I conclude with words from the first letter of John to the early church:

"We love, because he first loved us. If anyone says 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: that he who loves God should love his brother also. Amen

O God, who art the creator of all men: forgive our sins of hatred, prejudice, and pride. Forgive us O Lord for the sins of apathy and unconcern. Help us, we beseech thee, to see our oneness with all men: give us the humility to stand beneath thee as children of one father. O LOrd we pray for the families who grieve today in Birmingham. Be near them in their sorrow: descend upon them with the healing comfort of thy spirit. We pray O Lord for those who have caused this deed: for those who did it: for those who have condoned it: for those who have sanctioned it by their silence. Bring teh grace of thine infinite love to bear on their hearts and minds. Heal the cancer of hatred that resides in their haerat. Help us all O Lord: for we pray in the name of Jesus Christ: who died for all men - Amen